

॥भज गोविन्दम्॥
Bhaja Govindam
of
Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada

(English translation by S.N.Sastri)

(The font used for the Sanskrit text is BRH Devanagari. This font can be downloaded for free from www.baraha.com)

Bhaja Govindam is one of the most popular works of Sri Sankara. The essential teaching conveyed through this work is the need for cultivating an attitude of detachment towards all worldly matters and intense devotion to God. These two are necessary even for leading a happy life in the world . They are also the most important requisites for seekers of Self - knowledge.

भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं

गोविन्दं भज मूढमते ।

संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले

न हि न हि रक्षति ङुक्ञ् करणे ॥१

1.Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, you deluded one! When the end is near, knowledge of grammar will not save you.

Note. 'मूढमते' does not mean 'fool' or one of deficient intelligence. It means 'one deluded by maya into identifying oneself with one's body, mind and senses'. We are all in reality the infinite Brahman, but, because of ignorance of this truth we think of ourselves as the body-mind complex. This wrong notion is what is called 'bondage' in Vedanta. In this sense even the most intelligent human being is a deluded person until he realizes the truth that he is none other than Brahman. The translation of this word as 'fool' does not bring out its real vedantic sense in the present context.

The expression ङुक्ञ् करणे is taken from the great grammarian Panini's list of verbal roots in Sanskrit. It is used here to represent the subject of grammar. It should not be concluded that Sri Sankara decries the study of grammar. On the other hand, knowledge of grammar is essential for understanding the upanishads and Sri Sankara's Bhashya. Here grammar stands for all worldly knowledge. The Mundakopanishad says that there are two kinds of knowledge—the higher and the lower. The lower knowledge includes the four Vedas, the science of pronunciation, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metre, and astrology (including

astronomy). The higher knowledge is that by which the Immutable (Brahman) is realized. The lower knowledge is necessary for all worldly purposes, but it is only the higher knowledge that will deliver one from the continuous chain of births and deaths. This is the idea conveyed by the statement that knowledge of grammar, that is, mere worldly knowledge, will not save you from samsara. So one should strive to attain Self-knowledge.

मूढ जहीहि धनागमतृष्णां
कुरु सद्बुद्धिं मनसि वितृष्णाम्।
यल्लभसे निजकर्मोपात्तं
वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम्॥२

2. O deluded one, give up your craving for wealth. Make your mind free from desire and fill it with the thought of Brahman. Be happy with whatever you get as a result of your past actions (karma).

नारीस्तनभरनाभीदेशं
दृष्ट्वा मागा मोहावेशम्।
एतन्मांसवसादिविकारं
मनसि विचिन्तय वारं वारम्॥३

3. Do not be infatuated by the feminine body. Repeatedly remind yourself that it is only made up of flesh, fat and similar substances.

नलिनीदलगतजलमतितरलं
तद्वज्जीवितमतिशयचपलम्।
विद्धि व्याध्यभिमानग्रस्तं
लोकं शोकहतं च समस्तम्॥४

4. Life is as impermanent as water drops on a lotus leaf. Know that the whole world is in the grip of disease, sorrow, and ego.

यावद्वित्तोपार्जनसक्त-
स्तावन्निजपरिवारो रक्तः।
पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जरदेहे
वार्ता कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे॥५

5. A person's family loves him only as long as he is able to earn money. Afterwards, when the body has become weak, no one in the house even enquires about him.

यावत्पवनो निवसति देहे

तावत् पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे।

गतवति वायौ देहापाये

भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन् काये॥६

6. As long as there is breath in the body, people in the house enquire about his welfare. Once the breath has left, even those who were dependent on him are afraid of his dead body.

The verb 'bibhyati' is in the plural. So the word 'bharya' means not only wife, but all dependents.

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं

नास्ति ततः सुखलेशः सत्यम्।

पुत्रादपि धनभजां भीतिः

सर्वत्रैषा विहिता रीतिः॥७

7. Remember that wealth is always evil; there is not the slightest trace of happiness in it. For the rich there is fear even from their sons; this is the rule everywhere.

बालस्तावत् क्रीडासक्तः

तरुणस्तावत् तरुणीसक्तः।

वृद्धस्तावच्चिन्तासक्तः

परे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न सक्तः॥८

8. The child is ever intent on play; the young man is infatuated with the opposite sex; the old man is ever immersed in his worries; None ever thinks of the supreme Brahman.

का ते कान्ता कस्ते पुत्रः

संसारोऽयमतीव विचित्रः।

कस्य त्वं वा कुत अयातः

तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः॥९

9. Who is your wife? Who is your son? This mortal world is very strange indeed. To whom do you belong? Wherefrom have you come? O brother, ponder over the truth of all these.

सत्सङ्गत्वे निस्सङ्गत्वं
निस्सङ्गत्वे निर्मोहत्वम्।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्त्वं
निश्चलतत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः॥१०

10. Association with the good brings about detachment towards worldly pursuits. Detachment leads to freedom from delusion. From freedom from delusion arises constancy of the mind (in meditation on the supreme Being). Constancy of the mind leads to liberation even while alive.

वयसि गते कः कामविकारः
शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः।
क्षीणे वित्ते कः परिवारो
ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः॥११

11. What lustful enjoyments can there be when one is very old? How can there be a lake when the water has dried up? What followers can one have when one's wealth is exhausted? Once the ultimate Reality is known, how can there be worldly life any more?

मा कुरु धनजनयौवनगर्वं
हरति निमेषात् कालः सर्वम्।
मायामयमिदमखिलं हित्वा
ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा॥१२

12. Do not be haughty because of wealth or friends or youth. Time destroys everything in a twinkling. Give up attachment to this world which is nothing but Maya and attain to the state of Brahman through knowledge of the Reality.

दिनयामिन्यौ सायं प्रातः
शिशिरवसन्तौ पुनरायातः।
कालः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायु-
स्तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशावायुः॥१३

13. Night follows day, evening follows the morning, winter and spring repeat themselves. Time plays and the life is running out. But the force of desires never lessens.

द्वादशमंजरिकाभिरशेषः

कथितो वैयाकरणस्यैषः।

उपदेशोऽभूद्विद्यानिपुणैः

श्रीमच्छंकरभगवच्चरणैः॥१४

14. Through this bouquet of twelve verses was instruction given to a scholar in grammar by the learned Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada. (The twelve verses are those starting from the second verse. The first verse is an introduction).
